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ILLEG/B

29 Jan 1959

[redacted] TO [redacted]  
Attn: Col. Sheppard

Urged Sheppard to plan a different method of approach to a series of meetings planned for following week on 1959 and 1960 shot series, *in order not to prejudice Col program*. "A full endorsement of a 60 series at this time would obviously negate the consideration of our participation in a future program since by default the program will have already been assigned to AF sponsorship. Decision re sponsorship matter yet to be decided by Exec Branch therefore it imperative that immediate delaying action be initiated with BMD troops.

CIA not presently raising question whether admin and security control shld rest with them or AF but wish to keep situation under control so that a completely thought out decision can be arrived at.

Suggest if Sheppard can support, that he take foll approach: With present slippage of THOR boostedx DISCOVERER series, and only one pad available at VAFB, extremely difficult to plan entire series for CY 60. A case can be made that such planning questionable in view of oft-stated position of ARPA that THOR is inadequate to carry necessary load. THOR DISCOVERER series therefore may slip into 1960 (CY) and wld therefore also be good admin planning to avoid two programs (D & f/o) competing for pad time. Good planning wld have D occupying launch pad during 1960 with continuing R&D efforts and testing of components looking to possible follow on.

NRO review(s) completed.

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To completely cover the 1960 series under present CORONA cover at this time wld be stretching the story too thin. Above approach only borrows from the CORONA cover story to the extent that present planning must visualize, for reasons stated, continuing R&D efforts for military component and related equipment contemplated for use in future years with proven vehicles. It does not in any way hint of an existing recon capability for THOR in 60. By suggesting use of ATLAS we would be satisfying those who have agitated for a recoverable recon system and the use of a THOR series will continue to be justified to check out the recovery system that would be involved as well as all other elements of an advanced system.

In furtherance of this approach it will also be necessary to fuzz up the actual total number of launches contemplated in much the same manner as has been done in DISCOVERER series. The rationale being that no firm figure for 60 can be given until the 59 series is further along. In this way all firings in 60 will appear to be an extension of the 59 firings due to delays in the vehicle itself as well as launch facilities.

Please telephone Geo or Ted immed on receipt this msg to resolve possible variants. RMB contemplates calling Gen Schriever and Dick Horner.....